



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

March 29, 2006

# News Release

## **Federal agent sentenced on charges of bribery, money laundering, obstruction of justice, and misuse of federal databases**

TAMPA, FLA - United States Attorney Paul I. Perez and Acting Special Agent in Charge Steven J. Mocsary, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Professional Responsibility announced today that U.S. District Judge Steven D. Merryday sentenced RAFAEL FRANCISCO PACHECO, JR., 35, of Tampa, to seven years and three months' imprisonment. On December 7, 2005, PACHECO pleaded guilty to 27 felony counts related to receiving bribes from a narcotic trafficker between December 1999 and June 2001, while he was employed as a Special Agent with the United States Customs Service, now U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. PACHECO pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, five counts of receiving bribes as a public official, one count of misleading other law enforcement officers in an attempt to hinder a possible federal investigation of the drug trafficker who was paying him the bribes, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, six counts of money laundering, one count of obstruction of a federal grand jury proceeding, and two counts of making false statements to agents of the Internal Revenue Service.

According to the plea agreement, between December 1999, and June 2001, PACHECO, a Special Agent with the United States Customs Service, received almost \$18,000.00 in bribes from Fidencio Estrada ("Estrada"), a citizen of Mexico, who was known to PACHECO to be a suspected narcotics trafficker and money launderer.

PACHECO received money (bribes) from Estrada to influence PACHECO to perform official acts in violation of his sworn duties. Specifically, on at least nine occasions, Estrada paid bribes to PACHECO in return for and to influence official acts by PACHECO.

Most of the bribes were paid by Estrada through Western Union money transfers sent by third parties in their names as directed by Estrada, to conceal the nature, source and ownership of the bribe money, that is, to conceal that it was Estrada's money. PACHECO received the Western Union money transfers which were issued in the form of checks. Pacheco then, in most instances, cashed the checks before depositing the cash into his personal checking account -- to further disguise and conceal the source and nature of the cash bribes.

On various other occasions, PACHECO received cash bribes directly from Estrada. Specifically, near the end of February 2000, PACHECO traveled to Texas and received at least \$6400.00 in cash from Estrada. On March 1, 2000, after returning to Tampa, PACHECO used the \$6400.00 to pay off a vehicle loan at the Florida Customs Federal Credit Union.

During the same time period that PACHECO received these bribes from Estrada, PACHECO unlawfully accessed the TECS and NCIC databases to obtain restricted information regarding Estrada and others. PACHECO thereafter provided this information from those restricted databases to Estrada.

On May 2, 2000, during the time period when he was receiving bribes from Estrada, PACHECO sent a memorandum on U.S. Customs letterhead to a Senior Customs Representative at the American Consulate in Monterrey, Mexico. The letter falsely indicated that Estrada was assisting the U.S. Customs Service in Tampa in criminal investigations. In fact, Estrada was never a source or informant for law enforcement. The letter requested the Senior Customs Representative to coordinate with the American Consulate in obtaining visas to assist Estrada's wife and daughter in entering the United States. Based on this false information and representations made by PACHECO, visas were issued to Estrada's wife and daughter on May 19, 2000, facilitating their entry into the United States.

On December 3, 2000, during the time period when PACHECO was receiving bribes from Estrada, a Texas State Trooper initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle in Brazoria County, Texas, that was occupied and driven by Estrada. Estrada was arrested for traffic violations and gave consent to search the vehicle. The Trooper found PACHECO's business card in the vehicle. During the course of the arrest, the Trooper became aware that just four months earlier, in August 2000, Estrada was an occupant of a vehicle stopped by Texas State Troopers which resulted in the seizure of \$74,980.00 in cash. None of the occupants claimed knowledge of the money. On December 3, 2000, the Trooper contacted PACHECO about Estrada. PACHECO falsely claimed to the Trooper that Estrada was an informant for the U.S. Customs Service.

On March 16, 2006, a federal jury found Fidencio Estrada, age 37, of Roma, Texas guilty of bribery of a federal agent and money laundering charges. Estrada was convicted on seventeen counts including conspiracy to commit bribery, bribery, conspiracy to commit money laundering and money laundering. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for June 23, 2006 at 1:30 p.m.

This case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Professional Responsibility. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS) assisted in the investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jeffrey S. Downing.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*